

**Listing of Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously presented) A nucleic acid hybridization assay kit comprising a sealed vial containing eukaryotic cells lyophilized in a RNase-free aqueous, isotonic solution treated with diethyl pyrocarbonate, wherein the cells after 4 weeks at 20°C have more than 50% of their 18S rRNA intact as measured by gel electrophoresis.

15. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14 wherein the cells are infected with an RNA virus.

16. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14 wherein the cells are lymphocytes.

17. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14 wherein the vial contains an inhibitor of RNase.

18-30. (Cancelled)

31. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14, wherein the cells are human.

32. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14, further comprising cell free nucleic acid selected to hybridize to a known target nucleic acid.

33. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14, further comprising at least one amplification primer pair.

34. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14, further comprising a labeled nucleic acid.

35. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14, wherein the nucleic acid hybridization assay is an amplification based assay.

36. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 35, wherein the amplification based assay is a ligase chain reaction based assay or a polymerase chain reaction based assay.

37. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 14, wherein the nucleic acid hybridization assay uses RNA extracted from the lyophilized cells.

38. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 37, further comprising a reverse transcriptase.

39. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 37, wherein the RNA is transcribed into complementary DNA during the assay.